I: Tew E-6 (no date) 1959 FT? Yao FT?

I. REGION OF MOZAMBIQUE

YAO, MAKUA-LOMWE, MAKONDE

In the region between Lake Nyasa and the east coast of Africa, between the Lukuledi river in the north and the Zambesi in the south, there is a congeries of peoples whose culture is very similar over the whole area. They are the *Makonde* group, the *Yao* and the *Makua-Lomwe* peoples. Of these only the Yao has been studied in detail. The scanty information about the other inhabitants of the region will be summarized after the fuller summary of the Yao material, so that points of similarity and difference may appear more clearly. Fortunately for this procedure the Yao occupy a central position, from which they may be taken to represent in many ways the culture of the neighbouring peoples.

The *Makonde* inhabit the Makonde plateau between the Lukuledi and Ruvuma rivers (39° and 40° longitude). Closely related to them are the *Mavia*, on the plateau of that name, south of the Ruvuma; the *Mawia*, north of the Lukuledi river, on the Rondo plateau; and the *Matambwe*, in the Ruvuma valley. It is possible that the *Ngindo*, *Ndonde*, and *Ndendeule* should also be included. This group seems to be culturally and linguistically distinct in several points from the Makua and Lomwe, and the Yao, although they have in common the main features of political and social organization.

The region of the *Yao* is between the Ruvuma, Lujenda, and Luchilingo rivers. They also extend into Nyasaland and Tanganyika Territory.

The *Makua* occupy the area between the Lujenda and Lurio rivers and the coastal strip from the mouth of the Lurio nearly to Quilimane.

The *Lomwe* are sometimes regarded as a sub-branch of the Makua, but probably have as much right to be called a separate tribe as the Yao. They are bordered by the Makua on the north, east, and south, and by Marevi on the west. South of them, around Quilimane and east of the Mlanje[1] mountains, are the *Chuabo*,[2] related to the Makua and Lomwe, and also the *Pokomo*, on the south bank of the Zambesi delta.

The *region* is forested lightly or heavily, and varies in character according to the elevation, soil, and humidity. The coastal belt from Mozambique northwards has thorn-bush vegetation, thick in parts, giving way to light forest and grassland further inland. In the uplands there is good forest, broad-leaved and evergreen, and deciduous trees near the lake district. Throughout the territory there are narrow strips of richer vegetation along the watercourses, and along the coast mangrove swamps occur at intervals. In the highlands the mornings and evenings are cool and pleasant for eight months of the year, and it is even cold at night in May and August, temperatures of 50° and 60° F. being common in the day. In the hot season the heat is severe, especially in the valley of the Ruvuma. The mean annual rainfall for Mozambique is 39·50 in. and for Likoma on the lake, 39·9 in.[2]

The people are primarily cultivators, but the Yao keep cattle in the highlands. Both Yao and Makua traded with the Arabs and were energetic slave-raiders. The coast Makua and most of the Yao are Islamized.

[1] *z* pronounced as *ch*.

[2] *Handbook of Portuguese East Africa*, 1920, pp. 68-77.

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(iv) Another group is on the south-west side of the lake, north of the Ngoni at Dedza and east of the Ngoni of Ncheu district.[1]

Although these are the main concentrations of Yao, smaller communities are scattered through most of the districts of south Nyasaland.

MAP SHOWING MORE IMPORTANT SITES CONCERNED WITH YAO INFILTRATION

Distribution of Yao shown as a percentage of the population of each district
(1931 Census)

Over 50%:	South Nyasa	71%	10–20%: Dedza 15%
	Upper Shire	64%	Dowa 8%
			Mlanje 6%
30–40%:	Blantyre	38%	Chola 5%
20–30%:	Chiradzulu	28%	0–5%: Chikwawa 0%
	Zomba	26%	Ncheu 13%

History

Nothing is known of the history of the Yao before their settlement at Mocmba.[2] Their contact with the Arab traders from the east coast had probably continued for 200 years before the Europeans arrived.[3] When Lacerda wrote in 1798 the Yao were

[1] Codrington, 1898, p. 312.
[2] Stannus, A. 1922, p. 231; Haskard, 1933, p. 7; Murray, 1930.
[3] Livingstone in 1866 noted the strength of Arab influence.

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places it in the same group of languages as Makua, Nkonde, and Tumbuka, but not with Makonde. He counts Nginda as a dialect of Yao.[1] Guthrie places it in the Makonde group, but not in the Makua-Lomwe group.[2] 197

The Yao language shows very little dialectical variation, which is attributed to the age-long Yao love of travel. Such differences as occur are found chiefly in accent or idiom, not in grammatical structure. There are five different divisions corresponding to the different branches of the tribe: (*a*) *Amakale*, near the sources of the Ruvuma; (*b*) *Mwembe*, near Mataka's, south of the Ruvuma; (*c*) *Masaninga*, near the south end of Lake Nyasa; (*d*) *Mangoche*, near Blantyre; (*e*) *Machinga*, on Mounts Chikala and Zomba.[3]

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Yao boundary on the west, where they mix with Nyanja peoples of the east lake shore, is a line of hills about 1,500 ft. above the lake level, extending south to Mangoche. Starting north-east from the fertile valley of the Mandimba, there is a fairly level plain, watered by other tributaries of the Lujenda, as far as Mataka's and Mtarika. On the east side of the Luchilingo river there is a fairly continuous line of mountain fastnesses and hills, and from the source of the Msinje to its confluence with the Ruvuma, there are lines of fortresses to the east and west, traversed by steep mountain tracks. From the Msinje source to the Ruvuma the country is cut by deep streams and crowned by mountains 2,000 to 5,000 ft. high.[4] On the south bank of the Ruvuma, below the confluence with the Lujenda, the country is a semi-desert, with barren stony soil, little water, and plentiful game. The Yao also inhabit the western edge of the Makondi plateau, where the valley of the Ruvuma widens into a great plain. Here the sandstone of the Makondi plateau is denuded and the soil is barren and stony. The Makondi bush gives way to thin open forest of mimosa and other trees.[5] Most of the Yao country in the east of Portuguese East Africa is tsetse infested, but in the interior, approaching the east shore of Lake Nyasa, it is capable of supporting fine herds.[6] 133 [131]

South Nyasa district is mountainous in the east; the plain in the west stretches into Dedza and Ncheu districts. Owing to scarcity of water in the dry season this plain is thinly populated. The soil of the plain is sandy, except on the shore of the lake and the river bank, where it is rich alluvial soil; in the hilly parts the soil is clayish. During the last few years the lake level has risen and on the lake shore and the banks of the Shire river water is plentiful throughout the year. Smaller rivers have enough water all the year round to supply villages. The average annual rainfall at Fort Johnston is 33 in. for the last six rainy seasons, but the general average is 28 in. The average mean temperature is 75° F. The climate in the plains and at Fort Johnston is hot and trying in the hot season, but cooler on the hills. The greater part of upper Shire district is below 2,000 ft. in altitude and hot and unhealthy. In the dry weather most rivers are 132

[1] 1945, p. 65.
[2] 1948, p. 62. *Naturally most of the earlier informants support Duke's classification, since they are mainly the sources on which it was based* (Hetherwick, *op. cit.*, Meredith Sanderson, 1922, p. xii). *Affinity with the language of the Gulf of Guinea has been claimed for Yao by Dr. Albert Drexel, of Innsbruck, quoted by Heckel, 1935, p. 7.*
[3] Hetherwick, 3, 1900, pp. xix–xx; 1, 1893, p. 69.
[4] Johnson, 3, 1893.
[5] Thompson, 1882, pp. 67–78.
[6] Honoher, 1923, p. 12.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

Topography and Surface Water

[131] [133] The Protectorate of Nyasaland lies between latitudes 09° 45′ S. and 17° 16′ S. and longitudes 33° E. and 36° E. It includes most of the surface of Lake Nyasa, the most southerly of the African Great Lakes. This dominant topographical feature, from which Nyasaland has taken its name, is part of the Great Rift Valley which runs from north to south through the territory. On the western, northern and eastern shores of the lake the coastline is fringed by great mountain masses, some of which drop sheer to the lake without a coastal shelf. In the south, the broad base of the valley forms a plain through which runs the Shire River which issues from Lake Nyasa. The western edge of the Rift Valley is fringed by the Kirk Range which sweeps north-westwards to form the Dedza Highlands. On the eastern fringe the valley forks to the east to form a plain between the Mangoche Highlands, the highest point of which is 5400 feet above mean sea level, and the great mass of the Shire Highlands, the highest point of which is 11,000 feet above mean sea level. This plain rises sharply about 800 feet in a mile or two to 2000 feet above mean sea level, eastwards from the Shire River. This forms the scarp of the Great Rift Valley. From the scarp it slopes gently to the west to the smaller lakes Chiuta-Amaramba and Shirwa which lie on the Portuguese East Africa border. Between the Mangoche Highlands and the Shire Highlands the plain is broken by the Chikala-Chaoni Range which protrudes almost to the shores of the Lake Shirwa, just to the north of its centre. This range, which forms an outstanding natural fortress, has played an important rôle in the history of Kawinga's followers.

The Mangoche Highlands, the ridge along the scarp of the Great Rift Valley and the Shire Highlands, here form the watershed between the rivers which flow into the Shire and thence the Zambezi, and the rivers which flow into the Chiuta-Amaramba, thence into the Lujenda and to the Rovuma River, or into Lake Shirwa which has no outlet. All the main rivers flow to the Indian Ocean. While the Great Rift Valley is well drained by the Shire River, the plain is inefficiently drained by the rivers which flow to the two smaller lakes. The shores around Chiuta and especially Shirwa are liable to inundation during the rainy season: hence the area depicted on the map is not all suitable for

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

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[10a]

MAP I. AFRICA.
The shaded portion shows roughly where the Yao live.

human habitation. Large areas around Lake Shirwa are in fact marshlands in the wet season, and stretches of poor sandy and slightly saline soil during the dry season.

Generally speaking the distribution of surface water throughout this area is variable. The highlands are on the whole well supplied with streams which rise in the mountains and flow

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133 312 swiftly throughout the year. In the plains many small rivers flow quite strongly during the rainy season but dry up shortly afterwards and by July or August the water shortage becomes acute for many villages. In the rainy season plenty of shallow pools supply the wants of the people; as these dry up the women must go farther and farther afield to find water. To the east of the watershed of the plain the distance they may have to go is still within the bounds of possibility, but on the valley lip this is no longer so,[1] and large areas of the escarpment, especially to the south towards the Shire Highlands, are unpopulated. The Administration has been sinking wells in an attempt to increase the amount of land available for human habitation. It reports that soon after wells had been sunk villages moved there and started gardens:[2] this indicates the pressure of the population on 134 the land. Within the area where most of my study was made, i.e. from the northern fringe of the Shire Highlands, agriculturalists describe the soil as 'variable'. The Agricultural Officer at Zomba, writing of this area, said:

> In the valley of the Shire the soils may be described as rich sandy alluvium. Around the hills the soil is chiefly red with a high percentage of clay and a small percentage of sand. Much of the soil in the ridge of highland stretching from the Chikala hills in the south to the hills near Mount Mangoche in the north is sandy and poor, with pockets of good rich soil here and there. The soil improves as the land slopes down each side of the ridge to the west to the Shire Valley, and to the east to the shores of Lake Shirwa and Lake Chiuta.[3]

Climate

132 The climate is the tropical monsoon type. The average annual rainfall over the years 1944–6 at the three stations, Jalasi, Nyambi and Mlomba, i.e. placed at even intervals throughout the area of study, was 41·89 inches.[4] The rainfall is slightly heavier in the higher areas. This rain falls almost entirely during the

[1] The relation of water supply to population distribution in Nyasaland is discussed by Dixey, F., 'The Distribution of the Population of Nyasaland', *Geographical Review*, xviii (April 1928), 274 ff.

[2] *Nyasaland Protectorate Report on Native Affairs* (Zomba, 1931), 47.

[3] *Report of the Agricultural Officer, Zomba, to the Director of Agriculture* (1944), (unpublished).

[4] I am indebted to the Agricultural Officer, Fort Johnston, for this information.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 · FT7 Yao FT7

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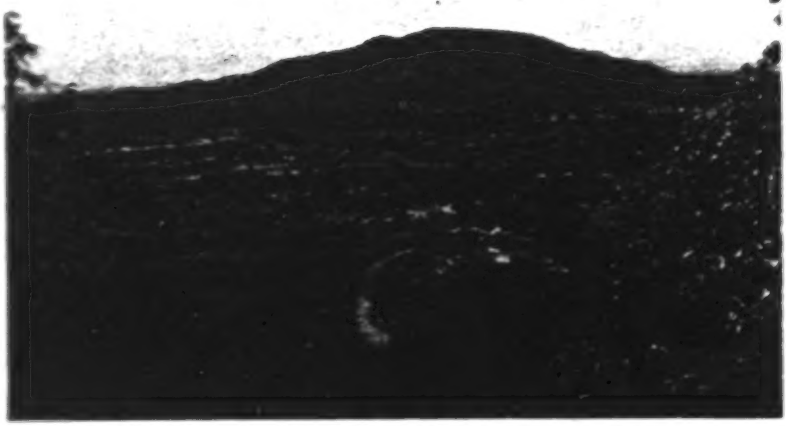

(*a*) Villages on the floor of the Rift Valley near Fort Johnston.
(*December 1949*)

(*b*) A village in the Domasi Valley near Zomba.
(*September 1949*)

PLATE III

[facing p. 46]